

FIRST INVASION THE WAR OF 1812



STUDY GUIDE

The American Revolution delivered to the world not only a new nation but the firm promise that the United States would provide an example of independence, freedom, equality, and sovereignty. Yet just thirty years after independence from Great Britain was won, the War of 1812 signaled that the tests the United States would face, both internally and externally, were severe. Tension between the United States and England persisted in the years after the revolution. A complex set of concerns, including the impressments of American citizens into the British navy and the ongoing efforts of the British to control commerce on the high seas, thrust the two nations into war. What has been termed America's "second war of independence" was authorized by Congress in June of 1812 in response to the pleas of a reluctant yet determined President James Madison. In what would become a three-year odyssey fought on many fronts, these two nations challenged each other in Canada, at sea, and in the heart of the nation's capital.

First Invasion: The War of 1812 is a dramatic and engaging introduction to the many phases of this war, from its declaration through the climactic Battle of New Orleans in 1815. Several battles and skirmishes took place in the first two years of the war as an ill-prepared U.S. military suffered few victories and ample defeats. Just as the conflict seemed destined to decline in intensity, however, the British resolved their war with France, freeing up their resources for a new drive to seize control of the North American economy. As the British invaded the capital and set the White House afire in 1814, the United States was in serious jeopardy. The nation rose to the challenge in the city of Baltimore as military units and dedicated privateers repelled the British after an unrelenting bombardment at Fort McHenry. The sight of the American flag waving boldly in Baltimore Harbor inspired Francis Scott Key to write the words to what would become the national anthem. After a final victory in the Battle of New Orleans, The Treaty of Ghent was ratified and the War of 1812 was officially over. No territory was conceded on either side, and many of the issues which drove the onset of the war had been resolved by the time it was concluded. But for the United States, the war was a momentous victory, uniting the citizens of this founding nation and imprinting in the eyes of the world the strength and resilience of its pledge for independence. This compelling program invites students to consider the War of 1812 as a critical chapter in the process of American identity formation as the nation turned inward to define itself anew.



THE HISTORY CHANNEL.
WHERE THE PAST COMES ALIVE.

FIRST INVASION THE WAR OF 1812

CURRICULUM LINKS:

First Invasion: The War of 1812 would be useful for American history, American culture, and social studies courses. It is appropriate for middle school and high school. *First Invasion* is an excellent resource for classroom use, providing students with a framework for understanding the path from independence to industrialization. It fulfills the following standards as outlined by the National Council for History Education: Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas and Institutions, Patterns of Social and Political Interaction, and Comparative History of Major Developments.

VOCABULARY:

Manifest Destiny	– the 19th-century doctrine asserting that the United States was destined to expand westward to the Pacific and to exert economic and social control throughout North America
uncharted territory	– an area of land not recorded or plotted on a map, chart, or plan
commerce	– the exchange, buying and selling of goods on a large scale involving transportation from place to place
maritime	– of or relating to navigation or commerce on the sea
impressment	– the act of seizing goods for public use or of forcing persons into public service
maelstrom	– a powerful, often violent whirlpool sucking in objects within a given radius
fervor	– intensity of feeling or expression
privateer	– an armed private ship licensed to attack enemy ships; also: a sailor on such a ship
disparity	– markedly distinct in quality or character
frigate	– a light boat propelled originally by oars but later by sails; a war vessel smaller than an attack ship
flotilla	– a fleet of ships or boats; a navy organizational unit consisting of two or more squadrons of small warships
erudite	– possessing extensive knowledge acquired chiefly from books



THE HISTORY CHANNEL
WHERE THE PAST COMES ALIVE.

FIRST INVASION THE WAR OF 1812

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What were the main issues which led to James Madison's Declaration of War in 1812?
2. What was impressment and why do you think it became such an issue between the U.S. and Great Britain?
2. Why did the New England Federalists oppose the war? How did this opposition play into later events in the war?
3. In what ways was the United States military unprepared for war as they took on the British in Canada?
4. The burning of Washington was a pivotal event in the War of 1812. How did Dolley Madison and Stephen Pleasanton help "save" the nation's history?
5. Though the War of 1812 was fought by men, women contributed to the war effort in several ways discussed in the documentary. What are some of the contributions women made to the war?
6. Why was the death of Robert Ross such a critical loss for the British?
7. What did the flag at Fort McHenry symbolize to Francis Scott Key? Were you surprised by the United States' victory?
8. The Treaty of Ghent was brokered in 1814, yet the war went on. What miscommunication led to the extension of the war to New Orleans?
9. What kind of methods did General Andrew Jackson use to fortify New Orleans in the military battle against the British?
10. Who do you think were the heroes of the War of 1812?
11. What do you think the long-term ramifications of the war were for the United States and for the British?
12. Why do you think the War of 1812 has been referred to as "America's Forgotten War"? Why should it be studied and remembered today?

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:

1) The War of 1812 was a major turning point in the history of the United States, but its events remain little known, perhaps because of its complexity. For this activity, create a timeline of the War of 1812 which will include the major events of the war. Break up into groups of four or five. Research the war using the library or the Internet. (Hint: **The History Channel**® website on the "Star-Spangled Banner" is a great resource for this task. You can find this page at http://www.historychannel.com/starspangled_archive/history_of_war/early02.html.) Be sure to compile a list of the key events in three main phases of the war: the battles in the North/Canada, the Chesapeake Bay/Washington, D.C. battles, and the Battle of New Orleans. After you have made a list of the events you want to include on your timeline, write them down on individual pieces of paper with their dates and years. Reconvene into your larger group, and assemble them chronologically by pinning them in order on a bulletin board or corkboard. (If unavailable, you can also use posterboard for this activity.) Have one member from each group place a date on the timeline. If dates are repeated, have the group member choose another date from your list. Appoint one person from the larger group to review the timeline and key events with the class.



THE HISTORY CHANNEL
WHERE THE PAST COMES ALIVE.

FIRST INVASION THE WAR OF 1812

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:

- 2) In *First Invasion*, we see how Dolley Madison and Stephen Pleasanton played heroic roles in the War of 1812 by protecting the Gilbert Stuart painting of George Washington and some of the nation's founding documents. Pretend that you are either Dolley Madison or Pleasanton at the critical juncture in the war when the British are headed to Washington with plans to attack the capital. Write a journal entry describing your decision to protect these documents and artifacts, and your feelings as the British approach the capital.
- 3) Two of the most important leaders during the War of 1812 were James Madison and Andrew Jackson. Together, these two men masterminded the war and brought the nation through a turbulent time. As is noted in the documentary, they were very different men, both in terms of their approaches to politics and the methods they used. With what you learned from *First Invasion* as a guide, research the roles these two men played in the War of 1812. In a short essay of 2-3 pages, compare and contrast their personalities and contributions to the war. Be sure to include your assessment of why these men were so critical to the United States' effort to win victory in the War of 1812.
- 4) One of the most important legacies of the War of 1812 was Francis Scott Key's poem which was later set to music and adopted as the national anthem in 1931. **The History Channel**® website devoted to the "Star-Spangled Banner" is an excellent introduction to the history of the anthem and provides several fun and informative activities. Choose one of these activities, located at http://www.historychannel.com/starspangled_archive/activities/activities.html, to learn more about the national anthem and its connection to the War of 1812.
- 5) Imagine you are in charge of teaching a younger sibling or friend about the War of 1812. In an essay of 1-2 pages, write this person a letter describing why this event was important in U.S. history.

RESOURCES:

Books

Benn, Carl, *The War of 1812 (Essential Histories)*, (Routledge, 2003).
Carter, Alden R., *The War of 1812: Second Fight for Independence*, (Franklin Watts, 1993).
Hickey, Donald R., *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, (University of Illinois, 1990).
Kroll, Steve and Dan Andreasen, *By the Dawn's Early Light: The Story of the Star-Spangled Banner*, (Scholastic, 2000).
Santella, Andrew, *The War of 1812 (Cornerstones of Freedom series)*, (Children's Press, 2000).

Websites

Digital History's page on the War of 1812: http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=21
The National Archives guide to the War of 1812, with links: http://www.archives.gov/research_room/research_topics/military/war_of_1812.html
The Naval Historical Center's frequently asked questions on the War of 1812: <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/stream/faq45-5.html>
A great site for younger students: <http://idloa.org/pages/ghent.html>



THE HISTORY CHANNEL
WHERE THE PAST COMES ALIVE.